

E-004826



Memorandum

Date: January 28, 1999
To: Policy Group
From: Lester Snow *Added for CAS*
Subject: Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP)

Summary

The proposed Vernalis Adaptive Management Plan (VAMP) is now under consideration by the State Water Resources Control Board. The plan would be implemented through the San Joaquin River Agreement, which details the required cooperative actions of federal, state, and local agencies. Assemblyman Michael Machado and Delta water agencies have raised concerns about potential impacts of VAMP on Delta region water users. Proposed CALFED Stage 1 Actions could potentially address many of these concerns. Various approaches for assuring that these actions move forward concurrently with VAMP are being assessed by CALFED.

Action Required -- Information Item Only

Detailed Discussion

Both the 1994 Bay-Delta Accord and the 1995 Water Quality Control Plan (WQCP) called for higher flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis during the April 15 through May 15 period and the placement of a barrier at the Head of Old River (HOR barrier) during the same period to aid outmigrating salmon smolts from the San Joaquin River watershed.

The major water rights holders on the San Joaquin River and its tributaries (the San Joaquin River Group Authority) proposed VAMP gather data to improve the long-term scientific understanding of the effects of San Joaquin River flow, CVP and SWP Delta export operations and the operation of the HOR barrier on San Joaquin salmon. SJRGA believes that this knowledge must be gained in advance of any full or partial implementation of additional flow requirement obligations on San Joaquin River water rights holders and that VAMP provides "equivalent or better" protection than the higher flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis specified in the Accord and the 1995 WQCP.

CALFED Agencies

California
The Resources Agency
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Water Resources
California Environmental Protection Agency
State Water Resources Control Board

Federal
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Reclamation
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Department of Commerce
National Marine Fisheries Service

According to SJRGA, the increased flows on the San Joaquin River at Vernalis during the April 15- May 15 period proposed in VAMP will be achieved by purchasing water from willing sellers within the SJRGA. The water purchased would be made available through a combination of increased agricultural water use efficiency and water transfers within the SJRGA and the development of various local conjunctive use programs. The annual payment of \$4 million to SJRGA is intended to promote these activities. However, SJRGA has not made any commitment to undertake the specific measures proposed.

SJRGA's analysis of the effects of VAMP indicates there will not be any significant adverse impacts to downstream water rights holders in the south and central Delta. However, the South Delta Water Agency and Central Delta Water Agency believe that SJRGA's analysis is flawed and that summer flow levels and water quality at Vernalis will diminish with VAMP. As such, they strongly oppose VAMP as currently proposed. The City of Stockton has also requested that the effects of VAMP on dissolved oxygen levels on the San Joaquin River be analyzed and disclosed.

Potential tools for assuring that CALFED actions and VAMP move forward concurrently are being considered, and will be presented at the Policy Group meeting.